

birds were well clear of the smoke and were gradually scattering over a wider area above the ocean. By 13.50 hrs there was no longer a congregation of birds for they had spread out above the shoreline and the foundry.

The only vocalising heard during the observation period was an occasional "kark" call by the circling birds.

—PERRY DE REBEIRA, Tuart Hill.

**An Occurrence of the Planktonic Blue-Green Alga, *Oscillatoria erythraea*, at Cottesloe.**—At 11 a.m., March 25, 1973, rust red bands of the planktonic alga *Oscillatoria erythraea* (syn. *Trichodesmium erythraea* sec N. Sammy, 'Historical Notes on the Sea Saw Dust' *Scios*, 8 (1), 1973) were observed in the main bathing area at Cottesloe Beach. The wind was almost due west, the temperature 26°C and the sea relatively calm. By 1 p.m. the wind had changed to a south-westerly and the alga concentrated into an area directly in front of the main beach pavilion. The concentration at this stage was sufficient to discolour the ocean and to deter bathers from swimming in its immediate vicinity. A sample was collected for identification in the laboratory and is now catalogued in the Herbarium of the Botany Department, University of Western Australia. By 3 p.m. the intensity of the south-westerly had increased and the alga was quickly dispersed. A previous record for *O. erythraea* at Cottesloe is recorded by G. G. Smith (*W.A. Nat.*, 12 (4): 81.

—K. F. KENNEALLY, Botany Department, University of Western Australia.

**Husking Seeds by Cockatoos.**—At the 1973 Annual Wild Life Show held in September in the Fremantle Town Hall, a very interesting observation on feeding by cockatoos was made by Mr Bob Reid, of the Nature Advisory section of the Education Department, and later confirmed several times by myself.

A female Major Mitchell, *Cacatua leadbeateri*, was seen to be feeding from a fresh dish of mixed seed when it plunged its beak deep into the seeds, *once only*, and climbed to its perch. Being within three inches of the bird Mr Reid was able to see quite clearly that there was a quantity of seed held under the tongue in the mouth. One seed at a time was moved to the top of the tongue where it was de-husked at the tip of the beak and swallowed.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, *C. galerita*, and Corellas, *C. sanguinea*, were watched closely and they fed in exactly the same manner. Even when given biscuits the birds broke off sizeable pieces which were stored under the tongue to be broken down later into smaller fragments before being swallowed.

—ARTHUR G. MATHEWS, South Perth.

**A Third Specimen of the Pectoral Sandpiper.**—The Zoological Gardens has received a Pectoral Sandpiper, *Erolia melanotos*, believed female, and is exhibiting it alongside four Sharptails captured with it. This specimen is the third to be actually taken in Western Australia (*Birds of Western Australia*, Servery and Whittell, 4th edn. 1967).

The bird was trapped on Streets' Lake, Moora, on February 6, 1973 by Wally Gibb and Jim Sharland of the Department of Fisheries and Fauna while engaged in capturing Pink-eared Ducks for Sir Peter Scott's Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, England. The five sandpipers were walked into a funnel trap, four Sharptails, *E. acuminata*, and the Pectoral. The last named was identified on the spot by Mr. Sharland and the birds were conveyed to the Zoo, where they have reconciled well to captivity.

Handling demonstrated the diagnostic features: breast sharply differentiated from the white abdomen; mantle feathers more rounded, less lanceolate than in Sharptail; tail outline doubly emarginate; in the bill, both mandible and premaxilla were dusky yellow for the basal two-thirds (in the Sharptail, the premaxilla is virtually all dark while less than one quarter of the basal part of the mandible is light-coloured). The crown did not exhibit the rufous tint shown by some (?male) Sharptails. The legs were light yellowish but not noticeably different from the colour of many Sharptails and would not be a good field character in my opinion.

—TOM SPENCE, Zoological Gardens, South Perth.